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Henry O. Stanley and His Fishing Tackle Business

William B. Krohn

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Dixfield ☆ Star

~ Honoring the Present ~

~ Preserving our Past ~

~ Looking to the Future ~

Henry O. Stanley and His Fishing Tackle Business

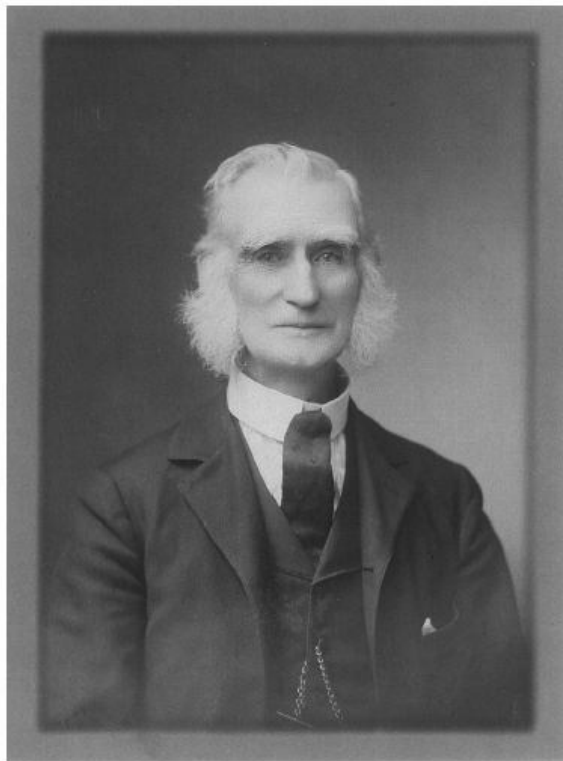
*Special to the Star by
William B. Krohn
Professor Emeritus
University of Maine, Orono*

[The September 2011 issue of the **Star** featured an article about Henry O. Stanley. This article, an overview of Stanley's life and family, was authored by Nancy Drew McReynolds, Stanley's great granddaughter. In contrast, the present article discusses in some detail only one aspect of Stanley's life, his fishing tackle business. The author is Dr. William B. Krohn, a retired wildlife research scientist.

Dr. Krohn has a long-standing interest in Maine's early naturalists and conservationists. He has been researching and reading the writings of Henry O. Stanley for many years. Dr. Krohn's books about two early Maine naturalists, Manly Hardy (published in 2005, out-of-print) and Joshua Gross Rich (published in 2010, available at the Maine Folklife Center, University of Maine, Orono), both include information about Henry O. Stanley - a leader who put the concept of conservation into action and made Maine a conservation leader in the 19th century. - ye Ed.]

Nineteenth century Maine was a cauldron of inventing and manufacturing. With literate, hard-working people and an abundance of natural resources, cities and towns across the state prospered during this period. Dixfield Village, with ready access to water power and rail transportation, was no exception. In the late 1800s through the early 1900s, Dixfield was home to dozens of productive mills and factories. There were large manufacturers such as those that produced spools for the thread mills in southern New England, the makers of a great variety of toothpicks sold throughout the country, and the cleaning and processing of wool (i.e., carding), so it could be made into yarn. But not all of the town's manufacturing was large-scale. Among the smaller manufacturers was one of the town's most prominent citizens, Henry O. Stanley.

Stanley served the State of Maine as an Inland Fisheries and Game commissioner from 1872 until his retire-



Dixfield's Henry O. Stanley (1829-1913), served as a commissioner of the Fisheries and Game department of the State of Maine for more than thirty years, first appointed by Governor Sidney Perham of Woodstock, Maine, the only governor ever elected from Oxford County.

— courtesy of N. McReynolds

ment in 1905 (excepting 1880). As is the case today, commissioners were appointed by the Governor, and while considered by many to be a prestigious job, Stanley's annual salary was modest. To supplement his income during his tenure with the State, Stanley owned and operated a number of businesses, including a general store, a grist mill, a wool carding mill, and the subject of this article - the manufacturing and selling of fishing tackle.

When Did the Tackle Business Start?

Mitchell and Davis' 1905 **Canton and Dixfield Register** states that Stanley was "interested in the manufacture of flies and fishing tackle which he began about the time he was first appointed fish and game commissioner." While Stanley may have been "interested" in manufacturing in 1872 when first appointed Commission-

that he produced much fishing tackle during this period, as I am unaware of any advertisements for Stanley-made tackle during this time. Further, in the 1870s Stanley was exceptionally busy with his new job as Commissioner, over-seeing the operations of his grist mill and wool carding factory, and running the general store he owned in Dixfield. Interestingly, the store started in 1856 as a partnership between Stanley and his cousin, Charles W. Eustis. In 1866 Stanley bought out Eustis and ran the store until 1885. The Dixfield Historical Society now owns the 11-foot sign that once hung in front of the store, first reading "Eustis & Stanley" and later painted over to currently read "Henry O. Stanley."

A letterhead from an envelope post-marked 1866 shows "fishing tackle" as one featured class of items sold at the Main Street general store:



Stanley possibly contracted with local people at this time to make flies and spinners for the general store, thus planting the seeds which eventually evolved into his tackle manufacturing business.

In 1880, Stanley was at Moosehead Lake assisting in the construction of a fish hatchery. In his absence, both his grist mill and carding mill, which he had bought two years earlier, caught on fire. The machinery in both businesses was destroyed. Tragically, his insurance had expired the previous day. This same year, due to political reasons, Stanley had not been re-appointed as commissioner. Apparently lacking enough funds to rebuild his factory and mill, Stanley started a smaller enterprise, the manufacturing of fishing lures. By the way, most of the information for this paragraph came from an article authored by Leroy T. Carleton, published in the March 1908 issue of **Carleton's State of Maine Sportsman Journal**, (hereafter called **Carleton's Journal**). Carleton was a fellow commissioner of Henry O. Stanley's and had known Henry's youngest brother, Frank, since they served together in the Civil War.

The Maine Register, a directory of local businesses published yearly, shows that Stanley's tackle manufacturing started in 1880, listing H. O. Stanley from 1880 to 1890 as a manufacturer of "flies & leaders." In 1895,

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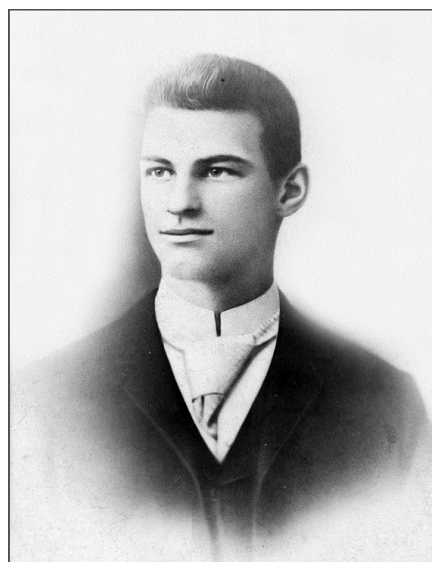
Contributors: Methyl Park, Albert Spaulding, Dr. Wm. B. Krohn, Nancy McReynolds, Bill Eustis

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A very young and stylish George Page Stanley (1868—1955), son of Henry O. Stanley. Photo by Miss Libby, Portland, Maine.

— From the Bill Eustis Collection

this description changed to "flies & fishing tackle." Three years later Henry's thirty-year old son, George P. Stanley, joined the business which was now called H. O. Stanley & Son. In 1907 George became production manager for the Dixfield Toothpick Company. Around this time Stanley & Son sold the rights to the Rangeley Spinner, perhaps their most profitable product, and started selling Cupsuptic Spinners. H. O. Stanley & Son at this time was apparently also called the Cupsuptic Spinner Company, suggesting that after 1907 the Cupsuptic Spinner was the sole product of Stanley's tackle business.

How Did the Business Operate?

The 1905 **Canton and Dixfield Register** claims that H. O. Stanley & Son, employing a dozen women, "sold 100,000 doz. [Rangeley Spinners] in 1904. They sell these entirely to wholesale dealers, including Iver Johnson and the Lowell Arms Co." Twelve times 100,000 is 1.2 million spinners, a large number indeed! Is this possible? With 260 potential work-days in a year (assuming 5 days/52 weeks), and assuming the women worked 250 of these days, this would be a total of 3,000 worker-days. Because 1.2 million spinners were claimed to have been made, each worker would have had to make 400 spinners per day, or 50 spinners per hour, assuming an 8 hour work day. Because much of the work was hand-labor, and these workers had other tasks in addition to making this one type of spinner, is this level of output reasonable? The preceding analysis suggests an answer of "no."

Both Iver Johnson and John P. Lovell Arms Company started in Massachusetts. Those companies were pioneers in the large-scale manufacturing and distribution of sporting goods. Lovell had a large factory in South Portland (and elsewhere) and dealt in firearms, fishing tackle, sporting goods, police equipment, and bicycles. Johnson had a similar product line. Lovell sold to wholesalers as well as operating its own retail stores. Lovell had retail outlets throughout New England, including stores in Bangor and Portland, Maine. As an aside, an illustration of the Lovell factory and a photograph of the front of their retail store in Portland, were published on page 181 in C. B. Gillespie. 1899. **Portland Past and Present, Issued Under the Endorsement of the Portland Board of Trade and City Government.** Evening Express Publishing Co. Portland, Maine.

What Were the Main Products?

Arlan Carter's book, **19th Century Fishing Lures: A Collector's Guide to U.S. Lures Manufactured Prior to 1901**, devotes a page and one-half to Stanley lures. Since publication of Carter's book in 2000, new source material has been found. An 8-page (counting the front and back covers as pages) catalog produced and published by H. O. Stanley & Son around 1900 provide previously unknown information about the sizes and other details regarding some of Stanley produced flies and lures (hereafter called the **Catalog**). The **Catalog**, produced by the Holt Brothers shop in Dixfield, includes a color illustration of a Rangeley



State of Maine Inland Fisheries and Game commissioners.

— *Commissioner's Annual Report* (1900)

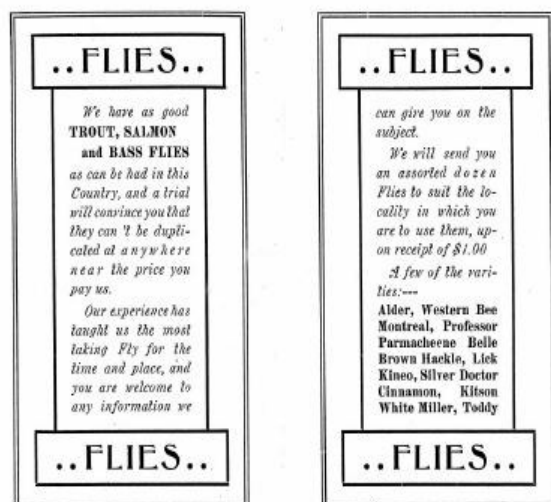
Spinner. As many readers of the **Star** know, this shop was located on the east side of Weld Street, opposite Henry's tackle shop and about 300 feet north. The Dixfield Historical Society owns many of the imprint stamps used by the Holt Brothers.

Another new source of information has been a full-page advertisement published in **Carleton's Pathfinder and Gazetteer of the Hunting and Fishing Resorts of the State of Maine, Together with a Digest of the Laws Pertaining to Inland Fisheries and Game** (hereafter referred to as **Carleton's Pathfinder**). 1899. The book's author, Leroy T. Carleton (1847-1934) was a lawyer in Winthrop, Maine, and a Maine Inland Fisheries and Game commissioner from 1896 until 1910. Leroy Carleton volunteered for the Civil War when only in his early teens, as did Henry's youngest brother, Frank Stanley (1848-1935). Leroy Carleton and Frank Stanley served together in the 32nd Maine Infantry and in their senior years jointly attended Civil War reunions. Newspaper photographs of Carleton and Stanley at two reunions can be found in the original **Frank Stanley's Scrapbook**, edited by Peter Russell Stowell and published by the Dixfield Historical Society.

Carleton, as suggested above, also published **Carleton's Journal**. Between June 1906 and May 1910, three advertisements for Stanley lures appeared on the pages of this monthly periodical. More importantly, the full-page H. O. Stanley & Son advertisement in **Carleton's Pathfinder** has detailed drawings of three of the Stanley-produced lures, and describes how the lures work and the varieties available for purchase.

Based on what we know from the above sources, as well as other period information, the following is a discussion of what is now known about Stanley flies and lures:

Fishing Flies. Initially, Stanley's tackle business focused on making and selling flies and leaders. Without an original labeled card with flies marked "made by H. O. Stanley & Co.," it is impossible to definitively attribute any early fishing fly to Stanley. I have not seen any Stanley-labeled flies, but they could be out there - so please look in that old tackle box in the back barn! H. O. Stanley & Son produced and sold a variety of flies as advertised on pages 4 and 5 of the **Catalog**:



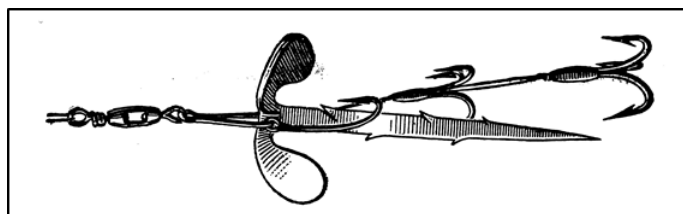
— courtesy of a private collector

In addition to flies, Stanley manufactured four types of spinners. Two of the spinners can be identified by Stanley stamp-marks, discussed below; the other two are not stamped and thus can not be definitively identified as Stanley products. All four had box versus barrel shivels (characteristic of an early lure) between the lure and the fishing line. The shivel minimized line twisting, which was needed because the four lures were designed for trolling behind a boat.

State of Maine Spinner. The **Carleton's Pathfinder** advertisement states that this lure is "To be used with minnow attached which causes it to revolve, placing it far

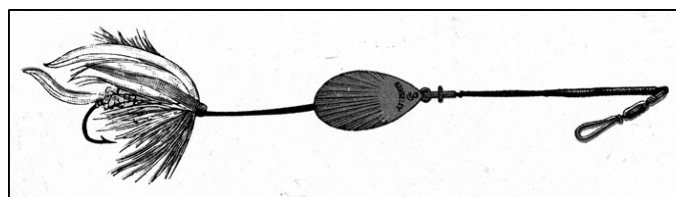
ahead of minnow alone as a bait for trout, salmon, bass, and pickerel." The lure is similar to the Hardy Spinner and Archer Minnow Harness, both early English lures designed for trolling dead minnows.

The State of Maine Spinner is unmarked, but differs from the English minnow rigs in that the spike that goes through the minnow is aluminum, not steel; the spike is flat and barbed, not round and smooth; and the spike and spinner blades are a single unit, not separate. The aluminum spike of a State of Maine Spinner is about the same thickness as the Stanley Aluminum Smelt (see below). Following is an illustration of this spinner from the H. O. Stanley & Son advertisement in the **Carleton's Pathfinders** (1899):



— courtesy of a private collector

Rangeley Spinner. This is Stanley's most famous lure. It was used and written about by Fly Rod Crosby and other notables. The Rangeley's fluted blade is distinctive (but apparently not diagnostic), as shown in this illustration originally published in color on page 2 of the **Catalog**:



— courtesy of a private collector

The **Catalog** claims that the Rangeley Spinner is "Acknowledged by all who have used it to be the most killing bait on the market." The lure has a single, fluted blade that came in gold, silver, or nickel. The spinner was made in four sizes and came equipped with a plain hook (to hold bait) or a fly (Parmachenee Bell, Toodle Bug, or Jock Scott). For those interested, descriptions of these flies, two of which were invented in Maine, can be found in Mary Orvis Marbury. 1955 (1st ed. 1892). **Favorite Flies and Histories with Many Replies from Practical Anglers to Inquiries Concerning How, When, and Where to Use Them.** C. T. Branford, Boston, Massachusetts.

In an 1907 interview of Stanley, the reporter published that "The right to manufacture the Rangeley Spinner was transferred to a Mr. Edwards of Deering, Maine...." Phillip W. Edwards was a sporting goods manufacturer located at 164 Woodford Street in Deering, part of Portland, Maine:



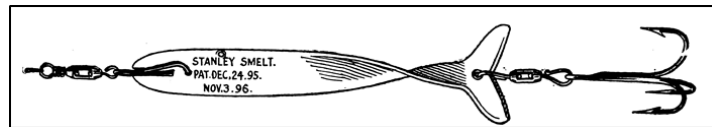
— Courtesy of J. Knapp

Edwards was married to Anna Conant from Canton, Maine, and he lived in Rumford Falls at the time of his marriage in the spring of 1899. Given the proximity of Canton and Rumford Falls to Dixfield, it's likely that Edwards knew Stanley before taking over the manufacturing of the Stanley Rangeley Spinner sometime in 1907. In October 1909, Edwards died at the age of 36. Following his death, the Rangeley Spinners were made by a number of manufacturers without crediting Stanley as the inventor.

Stanley Aluminum Smelt. As the name suggests, the body of this lure is made of aluminum. Too light to throw with a casting (or spinning) rod, and too heavy to cast with a fly rod, this lure was mostly trolled behind a boat. Stanley himself trolled this lure as documented in an article he authored in the May 29, 1897 issue of **Forest and Stream**: "At Moosehead and Sebec [Lakes] Messrs. Oak, Carleton, and myself ran two rods each - one baited with Stanley smelt, Sebago pattern, the other with live minnow. Every strike we had was on the smelt." Charles E. Oak, Leroy T. Carleton, and Henry O. Stanley served together as Maine Inland Fisheries and Game commissioners from 1896 through 1901.

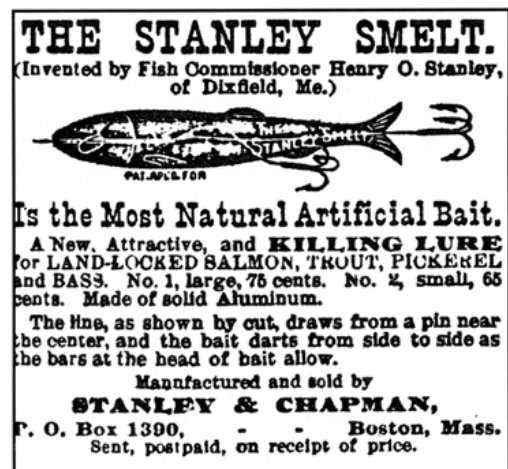
This is a sample drawing of the Stanley Smelt

from Carleton's Pathfinder:



— courtesy of a private collector

Note that this lure is stamped with two patent dates: Dec. 24 1895, and Nov. 3, 1896. Both patents were for the "artificial minnow." The first patent is co-assigned to L. Dana Chapman of Brookline, Massachusetts. The name Chapman is included on the earliest advertisements I found for Stanley lure, which was published during the spring and summer of 1895 in **Forest and Stream**:



— courtesy of a private collector

Chapman was an avid angler and an active member of the Megantic Fish and Game Club in western Maine. He was a salesperson for a large sporting goods dealer in Boston, but the sales of the Stanley Smelt - based on the above advertisement - was independent of his employer. How long the Stanley - Chapman partnership lasted is unclear, but by 1899 advertisements for the Stanley Aluminum Smelt no longer mention Chapman. In 1895 the Stanley Smelt was produced in two sizes and by 1899 four sizes were available. The lure came in a box and was equipped with a treble hook, either plain or dressed with feathers (e.g., the Sebago pattern mentioned above).

☆☆☆☆

— To be continued. Reminder: Dr. William Krohn will speak at the Dixfield Historical Society's June 14th meeting at 7:00 p.m. Be there and bring any Henry O. Stanley fishing tackle you may have!

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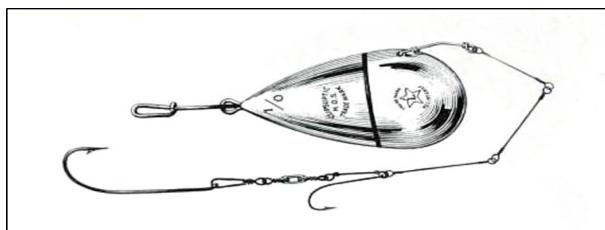
Henry O. Stanley and His Fishing Tackle Business

Special to the Star by
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University of Maine, Orono
Part II

[The June 2012 issue of the **Star** featured the first part of this two-part article on Dixfield's Henry O. Stanley, long-time commissioner of Maine's Inland Fisheries and Game Commission and pioneer conservationist. Author William B. Krohn focused on the origins and development of Henry's fishing tackle business near the corner of Weld Street and Main Street, just behind today's Bangor Savings Bank. Part II concludes his article with a special focus on images related to Henry O. Stanley's tackle business.- ye Ed.]

Stanley Cupsuptic Spinner. Wells Sporting Goods from Auburn, Maine, declared in an advertisement on April 15, 1911 in the **Lewiston Saturday Journal** that anglers should "Try a Stanley Cupsuptic Spinner the next time you are going where live bait is hard to get. You won't need live bait."

The Cupsuptic is a fairly large, heavy single-bladed spinner designed to fish subsurface, and was made in three sizes, all ranging from 1-2 inches wide by 2-3 inches long:



— courtesy of A. Carter

The production of the Cupsuptic Spinner started around the time Stanley ceased making Rangeley Spinners. The last Stanley tackle advertise-



This vintage photograph shows where Henry O. Stanley, sold his fishing tackle and other sporting goods. The sign atop the store reads, "Sporting Goods & Bicycles. H. O. Stanley & Son."

— courtesy of N. McReynolds

ments that I found was for this spinner, and it ran during the fall and winter of 1910 in **Carleton's Journal**:

TRY THE New Cupsuptic Spinner

The Best ever placed on the market for
 SALMON, TOGUE, TROUT, Etc.,
 Very durable—Great Bait for
 SEBAGO SALMON

Price 75c by mail, postpaid. If not
 satisfactory will refund the money

H. O. STANLEY and SON
 DIXFIELD, MAINE

— courtesy of a private collector

The few Cupsuptic Spinners I have seen that were attributable to Stanley all carried a large "L" in a star on the bottom section of the blade with the upper half of the blade stamped "CUPSUPTIC/ H.O.S./ TRADE-MARK." The star with an L is the trademark of W. T. J. Lowe Company of Buffalo, New York. It's possible that Henry O. Stanley made the spinners for William T. J. Lowe, but I believe it was more likely that Lowe made the lures for Stanley because as this time Stanley was in poor health and getting out of the tackle making business. He had sold the tackle store to Stockbridge and the rights to the Rangeley Spinner to Edwards. Because Edwards was a sporting goods maker, perhaps Stanley even had even sold Edwards his tackle making equipment.

When Did the Tackle Business End?

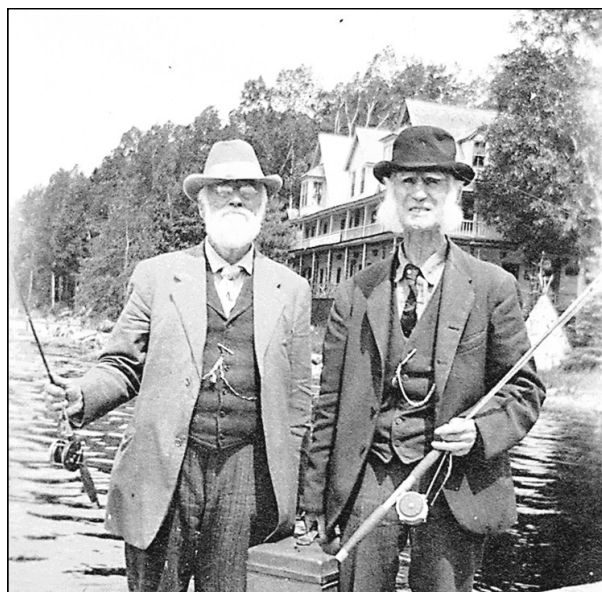
Henry Stanley had been in poor health since his 1905 retirement as Commissioner, and after a brief illness died at his Dixfield home in January 1913. The tackle store had been sold to Almon Stockbridge years earlier, about the time Stanley retired. Stockbridge immediately re-opened the business as a hardware store on the east side of Weld Street. Shortly after Henry's death the **Franklin Journal** announced that "Mr. [Frank] Stanley will take over the business of his brother, the late Hon. Henry O. Stanley of Dixfield and continue it. It is known as the Cupsuptic Spinner Company and manufactures several different kinds of fishing spinners, among them the famous Rangeley." The statement regarding the Rangeley Spinner is apparently in error because as noted above, Henry had transferred his rights to this spinner six years earlier following the selling of his tackle store.

Two years after Henry O. Stanley's death, in 1915, William T. J. Lowe died. While Frank Stanley continue selling Cupsuptic Spinners under his own name after Henry's death, I doubt that Frank continued the tackle business for long. Frank Stanley was now in his late 60s and was a successful businessman. During this later period of his life he was also active in various civic affairs, including town selectman and serving two terms in the Maine legislature. In 1916, the rights to the Lowe trademark went to Enterprise Manufacturing Company, better known as Pflueger. I found no evidence that Frank Stanley and Pflueger had any kind of working arrangement to produce Cupsuptic Spinners.

Closing Comments

There are still uncertainties and unanswered questions surrounding the tackle business of Henry O. Stanley, some of them noted in this article. Thus, this article must be considered preliminary, and as such my research into Stanley's life and times continue. I hope that this article helps to uncover new information about Henry O. Stanley and his tackle business. I am certain that there are still hand-written letters by H. O. Stanley to be discovered, as well as items related to his tackle business such as Stanley-labeled fishing flies or lures, lure boxes, receipts, advertising pieces, and other paper work. Should any readers know about sources of information that refutes (or supports) points made in this article, the author would appreciate learning about them (wkrohn@maine.edu).

This article would not have been possible it were not for the help of others. I wish to thank the following individuals for providing information and materials used in this article: Arlan Carter, Dwight Demeritt, Ron Goddard, Jim Hanlon, Jeff Knapp, Dan Leroux, Peter Stowell, and Nancy McReynolds. Jeff Knapp and Ellen Krohn reviewed an earlier version of this article.



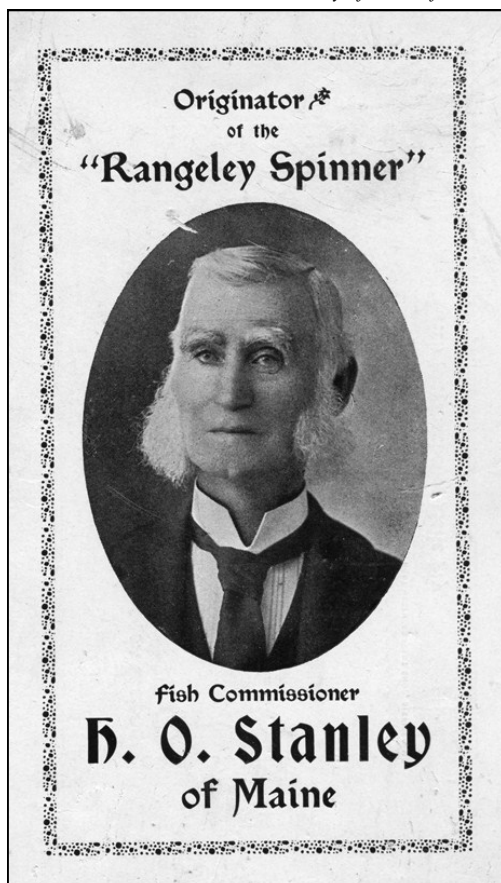
Henry O. Stanley, on the right, with his fishing tackle. Not only did Stanley manufacture fishing flies and lures, he was also an avid angler. Theodore L. Page (Stanley's companion) and his brother, George S. Page (not in the above photograph), assisted Stanley in building and operating the first fish hatcheries in the Rangeley Lakes of western Maine.

— courtesy of the Maine State Museum



Dixfield Village on the banks of the Androscoggin River showing the location of Stanley's tackle shop on Weld Street (below black arrow). On this 1896 map the tackle shop is listed in the legend as "Henry O. Stanley, Sporting Goods, Mfr. Stanley Smelt."

— courtesy of the Dixfield Historical Society



Front cover of the **Catalog** produced by H. O. Stanley & Son. Because the Stanley photograph first appeared in 1900, this pamphlet was probably published in that year or shortly thereafter. H. O. Stanley & Son was in business approximately fifteen years, 1898-1913.

— courtesy of a private collector

H. O. STANLEY & SON, Dixfield, Maine.



"STANLEY SMELT."

Made of Aluminum and has all the good qualities of both spoon and live minnow.



RANGELEY SPINNER.

Proven in 1899 to be the most killing bait of the season for trout and salmon.



STATE OF MAINE SPINNER.

To be used with minnow attached which causes it to revolve, placing it far ahead of minnow alone as a bait for trout, salmon, bass, and pickerel.

Mounted with single or triple hooks and sent in mail for

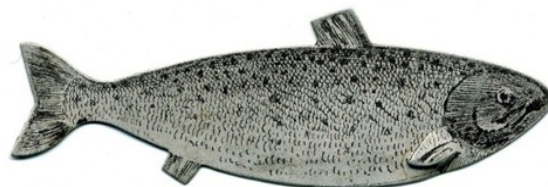
25c. With Fly attached, 35c.

Address,

**H. O. STANLEY & SON,
Dixfield, Maine.**

In writing advertisers mention Carleton's Pathfinder and Gazetteer.

This advertisement was page 76 in **Carleton's Pathfinder and Gazetteer of the Hunting and Fishing Resorts of the State of Maine**. Leroy T. Carleton, the book's author, was a life-long friend of Henry and Frank Stanley, and succeeded Henry O. Stanley as an Inland Fisheries and Game commissioner. Throughout his adult life, Carleton practiced law from his home on Main Street in Winthrop, Maine.



An aluminum bookmark that advertised H. O. Stanley & Son, made sometime between 1898 and 1907. The bookmark is approximately 3 inches long.

— courtesy of a private collector